Prices of wheat

992.SHRI EKANATH K.THAKUR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry has deliberately ignored higher domestic demand for wheat this year and instead of ensuring more supply, it has attempted to reduce demand by raising prices of wheat;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government have purchased less amount of wheat *i.e.* less than one million tonne of wheat, as against 3.9 million tonnes of wheat bought last year;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take to arrest the spiralling prices of wheat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) Government has not made any upward revision in the Central Issue Prices (CIPs) of wheat supplied from the Central Pool. The CIPs have been retained at the same level fro BPL families w.e.f. July, 2000 and for APL families from July, 2002.

(b) and (c) During the current Rabi Marketing Season 2003-04, 158.02 lakh tonnes of wheat was procured in the country as against 190.25 lakh tonnes procured during the previous Rabi Marketing Season 2002-2003. Less procurement was on account of decrease in production due to drought conditions.

(d) The open market prices of wheat are stable. Government is also operating the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) for wheat to ensure comfortable availability of wheat to consumers.

Diversion of Government supply to open market

993. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that unscrupulous ration dealers deprive the Antyodaya Ration Card holders, or similar other economically